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内堀優一

グラウスタンディア皇国物語 1

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内堀優一

■ 鵜飼沙樹

グラウスタンディア

Glau Stander Empire Story

皇国物語

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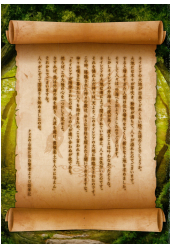
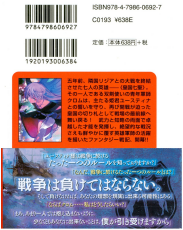
Glau Standear Empire Story - Volume 01

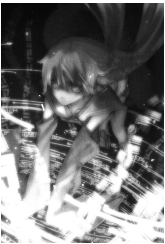
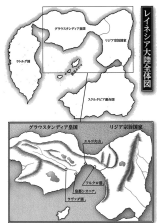
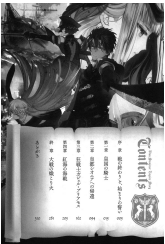
Chapter 00-01 (Incomplete)

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Novel Illustrations







●



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Character Profiles

「クロムだけでは心配なので、私も付いて行きます」

フィニス・マカオン

Fifnise Machaon
Age:15 Job:knight

グラウスタンディア皇国皇都軍の少女騎士。偉大な祖父を持ち、若くして騎士の称号を拝命した。クロムとはかつて一つ屋根の下で生活していた幼馴染でもある。

「ねえねえクロム。リュリュの力を使ってもいいよ」

リュリュ

Ryuryu
Age:13...? Job:unknown

クロムの妹として常に行動を共にする幻想的な少女。一般常識にはやや欠けるが、学習意欲が高く頭の回転は早い。

「……クロムはそういうところがあるのだ」

ユースティナ・クセルクセス

Eustina Xerxes
Age:16 Job:imperial princess

グラウスタンディア皇国の第二皇女。《皇国七聖》の主君でもあり、国民の平和を第一に考える穏健派。先の大戦以降、クロムに絶対の信頼を置いている。

「負けることがわかってて戦うのは勇気ではない。戦いは負けてはならないんだ」

クロム・ジャレット

Chrom Jarrett
Age:21 Job:strategist

救国の英雄《皇国七聖》の一人で、双剣使いの軍師。五年前の大戦以降、故郷の山で隠居生活をしていたが、ユースティナ皇女の召集を受け、リュリュを連れて皇国へと帰還する。

Glauc Standaear
Empire Story

Eustina Xerxes

Age: 16

Job: imperial princess

The Glau Standear Empire's Second Princess, who is also the liege whom the "Seven Saints of the Empire" have pledged their allegiance. A moderate who prioritizes the populace's peaceful lives. She has placed absolute trust in Chrom ever since the end of the previous war.

"...This is exactly one area where Chrom is very crafty."

Chrom Jarrett

Age: 21

Job: strategist

One of the "Seven Saints of the Empire" who were credited as heroes who saved the nation. A strategist and dual-wielding master swordsman. When the war ended five years ago, he returned to his homeland in the mountains to live in seclusion. Now that Princess Eustina has summoned him, he has returned to the Empire with Ryuryu in company.

"It is not bravery when choosing to fight in the face of guaranteed defeat. If you're going to fight, defeat must not be an option."

Fiffnise Machaon

Age: 15

Job: knight

A maiden knight under the Glau Standear Empire's Imperial Capital Army. Has a very distinguished grandfather. Obtained the title of knight at a young age. Also, Chrom Jarrett's childhood friend who used to live under the same roof.

"It is too worrying if you were to go alone, Chrom. I shall accompany you."

Ryuryu

Age: 13...?

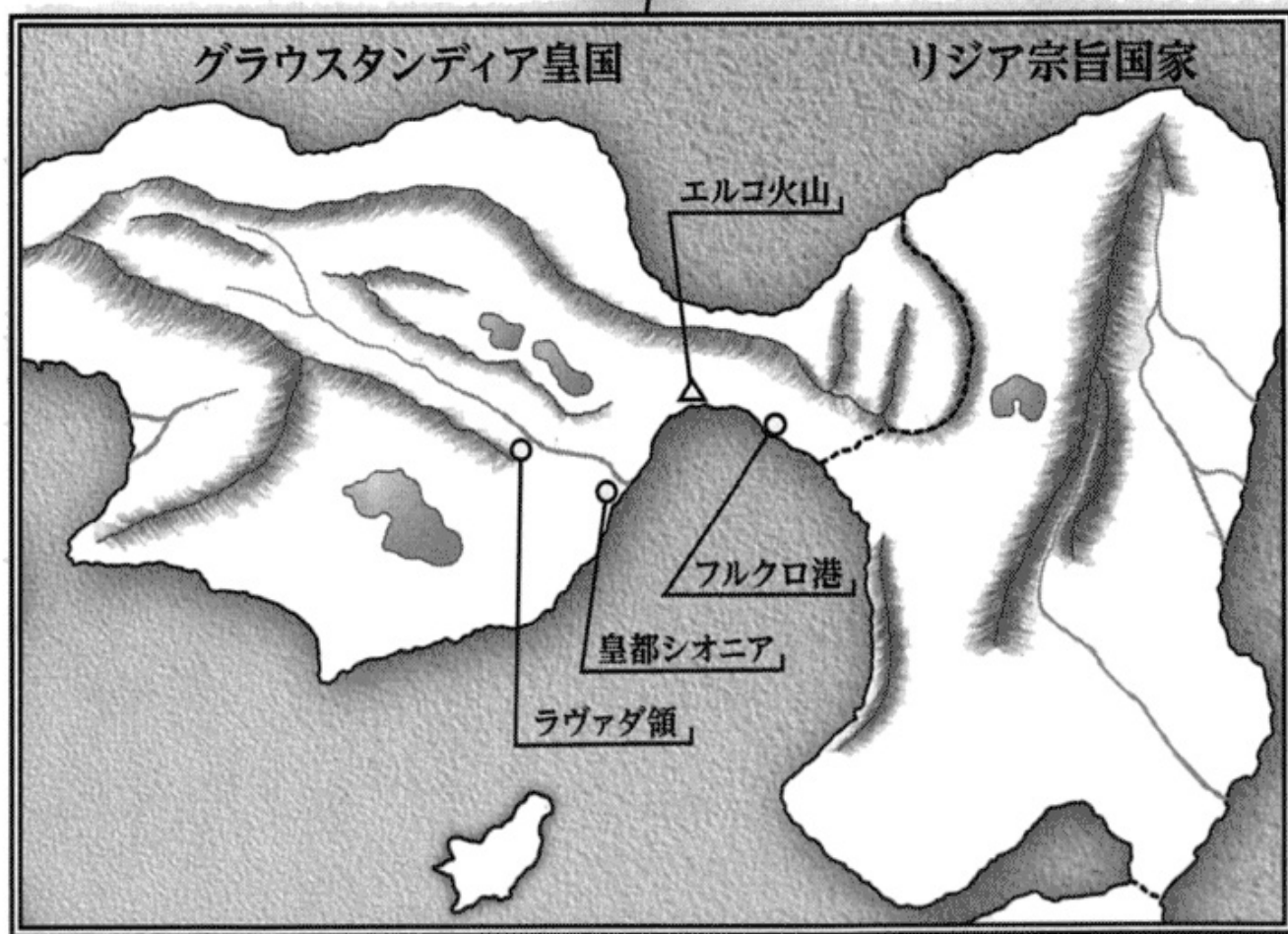
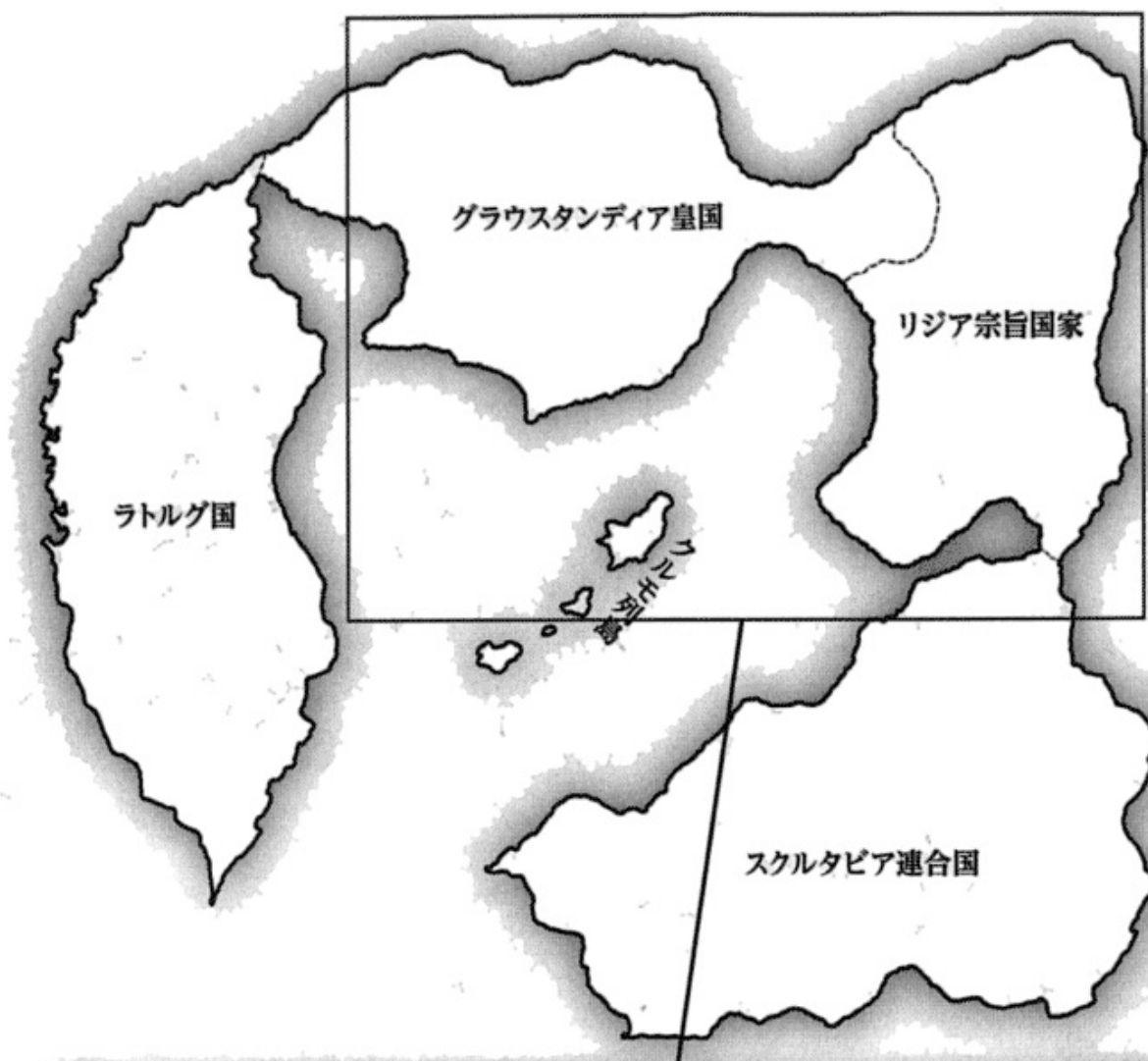
Job: unknown

A whimsical girl who frequently travels with Chrom as his younger sister. Despite a tendency to be a bit lacking in common sense, she is very eager to learn and has extremely quick wits.

"Hey Chrom, you do know it's okay to make use of my power, right?"

Map

レイネシア大陸全体図



Top: Overall Map of the Neyresia Continent[\[edit\]](#)

- note typo in map, the continent is known as ネイレシア instead of レイネシア in rest of the text

Clockwise from west end: Nation of Latorg, Glau Standear Empire, Regia Theocracy, Allied Nations of Scrutabia Center: Clemo Islands

Bottom: Glau Standear Empire on left, Regia Theocracy on right[\[edit\]](#)

Legend

- triangle: Elko Volcano
- circles: (left to right) Ravada Territory, Imperial Capital of Sionia, Port Frukro

Prologue - War's End and an Oath's Beginning

How many eons have passed since the continent of Neyresia had been formed?

A land covered with lush vegetation and teeming with life, mankind made its mark in every corner of the continent.

However, humans gradually found themselves running out of space due to overpopulation.

Hence, in search of new lands, humans were inspired to set off to explore the ocean.

However, the wind and waves in the outer ocean beyond Neyresia were quite violent.

In the end, no one managed to realize their dream of crossing the ocean.

By this point, humans finally noticed the fact that the Neyresia continent was sealed off by the ocean.

Towards their plights, the gods were filled with pity.

Hence, they descended from heaven upon this great land of Neyresia.

It was said that the gods descending from the sky numbered over a hundred in total.

Thus for the salvation of the lamenting humans, the gods declared.

"The reason why Neyresia has been isolated by the ocean is because human hearts have yet to unify. As such, let the hearts across this land come together as one. When such a time comes to pass, we shall carve open the outer ocean, calming great waves so as to bestow fertile land upon the humans."

It was probably from that moment on that humans started to band together to steal land.

—Recorded verbal statement from a sage who lived in the Quor Mountains in seclusion

Prologue - War's End and an Oath's Beginning[[edit](#)]

"The Glau Standear Empire hereby announces the formal acceptance of the Regia Theocracy's request for a truce. Warriors who have devoted yourselves to the Empire throughout this nine-year-long war, this is a victory won through your blood and bravery!!"

" " "Long live the Empire!!" " " "

News of the victory was spreading throughout the battlefield. The soldiers, who had continued to grip the hilts of their swords despite their wounds and fatigue, raised their arms and cheered loudly, causing the dry air to vibrate nonstop.

In every corner of the battlefield, all covered by rocks and sand, stood the flags of the Glau Standear Empire, primarily green in design, the color of the soldiers' homeland. Decorating the tall mountain range, this additional green color was the noble hue symbolizing the Glau Standear Empire. Like fresh saplings sprouting from a rocky desert, these raised flags fluttered in the wind. Witnessing this sea of flags after fighting a long war, the soldiers wept from a spontaneous wave of homesickness, but immediately immersed themselves in the joy of victory.

Precipitated by a great famine, this war would come to be known as the First Regia War.

"Come, let us all drink to a toast of victory tonight!"

The Glau Standear Empire's crown prince in command of this army—Ducat Xerxes—rewarded his knights and soldiers with fine wine and the victory banquet lasted until late at night as though it were a festival celebration.

Inside the lively encampment, there was one corner that seemed to be isolating itself from the victory banquet's festive atmosphere.

Under the starry sky, a group of people were sitting in a circle, gathered around a fire. The center of the group was a girl for whom it would not be wrong

to describe as young. Sitting at the girl's sides were seven people, each of them busy doing their own thing. Some were chatting nonstop, others were savoring fine wine and there was even someone immersed in reading.

The girl at the center was named Eustina Xerxes.

Only eleven years old, she was the Glau Standear Empire's Second Princess. Simply the fact that such a young girl was present on a battlefield was in itself quite an unbelievable and bizarre sight. But compared to that, the attire of the people around her was even more strange. The variety of outfits included that ordinary townsfolk, scholarly robes and glamorous clothing as gaudy as an actor's. Among them was a man wearing a leather breastplate who looked very much like a mercenary, as well as an old man in a well-ironed military uniform. These two formed a minority.

The old man in the military uniform spoke to the people around him, "Perhaps this might be the last opportunity for us to gather in this manner. Ilya, what are your plans from here on?"

The man had posed his question to Ilya, a woman dressed in glamorous clothing. A smile surfaced slowly on her face.

"Well, I shall probably return to Glau Standear and lead my drama troupe on a performance tour. Oh right, Faura, would you like to join me? You do have quite a deft pair of hands."

The girl named Faura replied with a giggle, "Let me see, since I don't want to be arrested as a repeat offender for pickpocketing, I guess I should simply leave with you, Ilya. But what kind of work do you plan on arranging for me?"

"Do you even need to ask? You'll run errands for me, of course."

"No way, at least give me a job in props or costumes."

Listening to their conversation with a smile, the old man in military uniform then turned to speak to a young scholarly-looking man.

"Rob, you have to stay by my side to assist in organizing and producing records for this war."

The man named Rob smiled wryly while scratching his head.

"I guess so. Furthermore, I need to organize the geological survey reports of the Regia Theocracy."

"Indeed, there is now a need to make map amendments."

"You really leave me no choice, Mr. Kauffman..."

Rob's response brought laughter to the old man in military uniform. Then he turned to the man in leather armor with mercenary airs.

"Gadjell, what are your plans? Given how you've distinguished yourself in this war, you may have a chance of being recruited as a castle soldier."

As soon as he finished, this skinny man in his twenties showed a rather overt expression of annoyance.

"What the heck? I'll have no part in troublesome work of that sort, old man. I'm better off sticking to my trade as a mercenary."

"Very well, I won't force you. But what are you going to do next? You'll be unemployed now."

"I'll take it easy for a while before resuming my old job as a mercenary. After all, in a few days' time, we'll have a peaceful world that'll have no need for mercenaries again."

"Yes, although it is too early to boast of peace for the time being, you make a fair point... Then Ur, I suppose you will be returning to your homeland to resume your trade as a blacksmith?"

Hearing the old man's question, the muscular middle-aged man beamed cheerfully and replied, "Yes, I will go back to the countryside. After all, I still have my own workshop back home. Besides, I have to go back to teach those brats how to make a living."

"Is that so? But given your skills, you would face no problems even if you wanted to open shop in the imperial capital."

"Master Kauffman, you shower me with too much praise. I know my own limits very well. Besides, there's good iron ore and timber in the countryside. Most important of all, my wife's waiting for me to return."

"So I see, that is good too."

During this conversation, a young man continued to do his own reading. His age was probably fifteen or sixteen. His appearance was a bit young to be called a man, but his eyes glowed with too much wisdom to call him a child. Exuding an unbelievable aura, this young man continued to flip through the pages of his book while reading from the fire's light.

"....."

Princess Eustina kept casting glances at the young man who focused on reading. However, he showed no signs of noticing her gaze the whole time. Reaching the end of her patience, the princess suddenly stood up and walked directly up to the young man.

"Chrom."

".....Huh? How may I help you, Princess?"

The young man named Chrom finally took his eyes off the words in the book after the princess spoke to him.

While rubbing her petite and delicate hands together nonstop, Princess Eustina asked Chrom shyly, "What plans do you have from this point onwards, Chrom? Umm... Will it be something of those lines? Such as staying at the Kauffman residence as a freeloader as before?"

Eustina furtively peered at Chrom as though very curious how he would respond.

However, Chrom's reply was especially slow. He stared blankly at the sky as though he was not even thinking about her question. Hence, Eustina asked again impatiently, "Assuming that is the case, you could also continue as an officer at the imperial palace. Otherwise, you could also serve as my private tutor... W-What do you say, Chrom?"

"Future plans huh...? Well, I was a mountain dweller originally, so I'm intending to return to the mountains."

"The mountains... You intend to return to them?"

"Yeah, or call it... Going back to my homeland? I feel like I need some time to reorganize all that I've seen and heard at the imperial capital and various lands,

to ponder properly. This war not only enabled me to follow Mr. Kauffman to the battlefield but also gave me a chance to frequent the palace. In the process, I've found some matters I must devote my thoughts to."

Hearing him answer so nonchalantly, Eustina leaned forward forcefully and continued to question him.

"W-What matters?"

A slightly troubled look surfaced on Chrom's face.

"It would only serve to confuse you if I explained to you right now, Princess Eustina. First of all, this is something that I haven't even organized in my own mind yet, which is precisely why I've decided I need time to put my thoughts in order."

"I-I see... But will you be returning to the capital?"

"...If a need arises... It would be best if the world could enter an era of peace, never needing soldiers and us to gather ever again... However, that would be merely wishful thinking given the world situation at present."

Apparently understanding what Chrom was implying, Eustina instantly put on a solemn countenance.

Even though the long war with the Regia Theocracy had ended, it did not mean that war had vanished from this world. No one would be surprised if some country brought war and conflict to the Glau Stander Empire again one day. Such was the current state of affairs in the world.

".....I see."

Murmuring in response, Eustina stared at the campfire absent-mindedly.

Gathered around Princess Eustina, this small group of seven, who really did not resemble soldiers, were known as "Pnévma" to the world at large. The first to call them that was Eustina's elder brother—Prince Ducat. Due to Eustina's retainers always taking action silently without warning, he had half-jokingly nicknamed them Pnévma, meaning ghost. However, these seven, hailing from all kinds of backgrounds and locations, had made full use of their talents. Whether secret spying missions, laying traps behind enemy lines, or manipulating false

information to provide to the enemy nation, they had cleverly confused their opponents. This method of fighting was completely different from battles determined by numbers of soldiers alone.

Beyond a doubt, the seven's activities had brought a dramatic turning point to the long war between the two countries. One could even say that it was thanks to them that the war finally ended with the Regia Theocracy proposing peace talks.

Thereafter, the Empire's knights and soldiers would reverently call them the "Seven Saints of the Empire" for playing a spectacular role in this Regia War. However, details of the individual identities in the Seven Saints was a secret that was not widely disclosed.

The princess stared intently at the fire for a moment then suddenly turned to face the Seven Saints. Occupied in their drinking and merrymaking, the Seven Saints also gathered their gazes upon the young princess.

"As a member of the imperial family, I cannot express my gratitude enough for your accomplishments in this war. However, with the Regia Theocracy first and foremost, Latorg on the west, the Allied Nations of Scrutabia on the south, and the Clemo tribe in the inner sea, these are all nations who greedily seek domination over the Neyresia continent."

The princess spoke in such a dignified manner that she did not seem like a mere young girl at all. Eustina gazed intently at the faces of the seven present.

"Should ever a time arise... when war threatens our country again, plunging the populace in hardship, may I request assistance from all of you again in that event?"

After listening to the young princess, the Seven Saints of the Empire sat in formal posture and bowed their heads. Then in unison, they swore eternal loyalty to the princess, promising to gather under her command to contribute their efforts should the nation face war again.

With one exception...

It was none other than Chrom. He declared firmly to Princess Eustina, "It feels a bit unfair if we are the only ones swearing loyalty to Princess Eustina."

"...Hmm, what do you mean by that, Chrom?"

Even in front of Princess Eustina, he still remained calm and composed. Speaking fluently, he said, "I'd like Princess Eustina to promise us one thing in return."

"Please name it, regardless what it may be."

"The next time we meet, Princess, I shall become a flag-bearer capable of raising your flag of idealism. However, if the flag you raise turns out to be an aimless flag, tainted with dust and easily swayed by the tides of opinion, please allow me to resign from your service."

Apart from Chrom, all members of the Seven Saints reacted with wide-eyed astonishment. Speechless. However, Princess Eustina remained unfazed. Staring at Chrom, she responded with confidence in her eyes.

"As you wish, Chrom. If I were to lack the conviction to raise the flag you speak of, a flag of idealism that would disgrace no one, I probably would not have the right to call myself royalty ever again. I understand that as a member of the imperial family, I must welcome you by raising a military flag devoted to the people of the world. As such, you must hurry to my side when the nation is met with crisis."

"Yes, I shall bear this in mind."

Chrom promised with his head bowed and a gentle smile on his face. The young princess nodded firmly at him.

Her eyes were glimmering brightly as though reflecting the myriad stars in the sky.

Princess Eustina and her aide, Chrom Jarrett.

Set in an era of war and turmoil, the story of these two would unfold as recorded in history, taking place during the Second Regia War that was to come, the break up of the Allied Nations of Scutabia that would result as a consequence, as well as the civil war in Latorg. While everything was developing towards the worst-case scenario, these two would try everything in their power to fight against the tide. One could say that it all started officially with the

instant of this oath.

This took place during Year 211, Imperial Era.

Chapter 1 - Knight of the Empire

Status:
Incomplete

Chapter 1 - Knight of the Empire[\[edit\]](#)

Imperial Era, Year 216. Counting from the day of the oath, five years had elapsed.

Chrom Jarrett had settled down in a home he built deep in the mountains where he had spent his childhood. Gathering wild vegetables in the mountains every day and hunting wild beasts for food, he was living a simple life almost no different from that of his ancestors in the ancient past. Listening to the rustling noises of the forest, feeling the palpable presences of living animals, this life involved bearing the blazing summer heat and shivering under the chilly winter cold.

To Chrom who had once lived in the imperial capital, this kind of life in the mountains not only filled him with a sense of nostalgia but also aided him in re-acquiring all kinds of instinctive senses again. More importantly, this sort of quiet environment was essential to Chrom for ruminating, contemplating and developing a holistic understanding of the various skills he had learned in the imperial capital.

Thus, after experiencing the same changes of the four seasons multiple times, he survived a long and harsh winter again this year. Fresh green shoots were also sprouting all over the mountain wilderness.

"Hey hey, Chrom."

While Chrom had his eyes partially closed, absent-mindedly enjoying the spring breeze against his face, the girl raised her little hand and tugged his sleeve gently.

"What's the matter, Ryuryu?"

The girl whom Chrom addressed as Ryuryu was looking into the distance at the vast mountain forest with her sleepy-looking eyes. Chrom followed her expressionless gaze and saw a stretch of rosy forest, filled with an air of fantasy.

(It's blooming again this year!)

Chrom thought to himself. The cherry blossoms, adding a layer of faint pink to

the surface of the mountains, were astoundingly beautiful just like last year.

Chrom turned his gaze at Ryuryu who was gazing at the cherry blossom forest in a daze. At roughly thirteen years of age, Ryuryu possessed a face with vestiges of childishness. After witnessing her whimsical speech and behavior, it would not be surprising for someone to mistaken her for a sheltered daughter from a noble household. The kind of rustic airs unique to mountain dwellers could not be sensed from her at all.

Seeing her gaze fixated on that patch of forest with blooming cherry blossoms, Chrom took the initiative to ask a question.

"Ryuryu, are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am."

Seeing Ryuryu nod honestly and respond, Chrom immediately took out meat jerky from his front pocket.

"Is this jerky?"

"Yes, it's jerky indeed."

"..."

"Are you dissatisfied?"

"No, but I do wish to eat something else once in a while."

Despite saying that, Ryuryu reached out to take the jerky that Chrom handed over. Stuffing it into her mouth, she began to chew.

Just as the two of them were chatting casually, Chrom suddenly felt a presence behind him.

Having realized the identity of the visitor, Chrom turned around without hurrying. The visitor was an old man who would frequently show up quietly. Appearing before Chrom, he stroked his long beard lightly.

"Chrom, there is something that is troubling me."

Saying that, the old man gave Chrom a different vibe from before.

"Did something happen?"

"...Some lowlanders have evidently entered the mountain."

"Lowlanders? But this area is very near the volcano and compasses don't work."

"Indeed. The visitors apparently knew this and consequently brought four mountain dwellers as guides."

"Even so, it'll still be dangerous. Besides, as mountain dwellers, these people should be stopping them instead. Carelessly putting lowlanders at risk is against the rules of the mountain..."

Even when accompanied by those who were familiar with mountain geography, entering this mountain forest, akin to a sea of trees, was still quite dangerous. In particular, this land where magnetic fields were in disarray was regarded as an absolutely forbidden zone. Telling lowlanders not to enter without permission was part of a mountain dweller's duty. This was how a trusting relationship was built between settlements and the mountains.

Chrom began to contemplate about how to deal with these mountain dwellers who had clearly neglected their duties when the old man brought up something even more unbelievable.

"Hmm, it seems that they have mixed poison into the lowlanders' food with ulterior motives."

"Come again?"

Hearing that, Chrom instantly reached out and grabbed two sets of bows and arrows that were propped up on the side.

"Please tell me the exact location."

"Are you going there?"

"Of course. If mountain dwellers are causing trouble, it's also my duty as a mountain dweller to stop them."

"I see, I see. I do not wish to see unnecessary bloodshed in the mountains either."

As soon as the old man finished, he provided Chrom with various information including the detailed location and number of people at the scene.

The place was not far away, but even at normal running speed, it would still take thirty minutes to reach, hence taking a shortcut was imperative. There was a total of four mountain dwellers and six lowlanders at the scene. Although the lowlanders had numerical superiority, it would be a totally different situation if they were poisoned.

Chrom picked up several vials of antidote he had preserved in advance and stuffed them into his front pocket. Immediately, Ryuryu suddenly asked him with a piece of jerky in her mouth, "Are you going somewhere?"

"Yeah... Do you want to help out, Ryuryu?"

"Of course."

Chrom nodded at Ryuryu and handed one of his bows to her, then ran as quickly as he could. Exiting the thatched hut, he ran down the mountain in one go, jumping down a rocky slope that was almost like a cliff. The difference in elevation was over 218m, a terrifying height. Be that as it may, Chrom jumped down without hesitation, stepping on a nearby foothold of rock then following his momentum to jump to the next rock. By kicking virtually vertical rocks to slow down his rate of descent, he raced down the mountain in almost no time at all.

Meanwhile, Ryuryu followed him closely without even needing to catch her breath.

Along the way, Chrom found a tree he needed and immediately stopped, drew out his machete and stabbed the trunk. Using his machete to chop the tree hard, he also applied force to make the blade slice vertically down from the cut. As the blade slid down, following the fibers of the wood, he successfully extracted a patch of bark.

Slicing the bark vertically in equal intervals, he quickly created dozens of wooden rods. Then he shaved the front ends of the sticks into sharp pyramids. At this point, the wooden rods gradually started to resemble arrows. However, these arrows were not fitted with fletchings. It would be utterly impossible for arrows to strike targets accurately without fletchings, but Chrom did not seem to mind at all. Placing these arrows into his quiver, he began to hurry on his way again.

"Hey Chrom, even if you make wooden arrows from the bark..."

Even the normally expressionless Ryuryu was showing a troubled look.

"I know what you're trying to say, but this will suffice for my purposes."

"Oh, I see."

Ryuryu nodded and did not pursue the issue any further. While explaining to Ryuryu what needed to be done next, Chrom continued to sprint.

After running like this for a while, they finally reached the vicinity of their destination.

At this moment, a conversation could be heard from the depths of the forest.

Chrom and Ryuryu concealed their presences and hid behind trees to observe the situation.

"Hehehe, looks like the drugs are definitely taking effect."

Men clad in animal skin clothing, unique to mountain dwellers, grinned crudely. The numbers were as described as the old man, a total of four. Nearby, there were several human corpses that were dressed as soldiers.

(Am I too late...?)

Chrom secretly clicked his tongue mentally then turned his gaze back to the mountain dwellers.

The group had surrounded a young girl who seemed to be a minor.

"Hey look, this little lady seems angry."

"Too bad~~ She can't move even if she's angry."

It looked like the girl was unharmed for now.

The girl glared sharply at the mountain dwellers but was probably powerless to do anything else. She showed no signs of trying to get up and resist. It looked like she was under the effects of a paralyzing drug.

With a pained look, the girl mustered all her strength to force out a voice.

"...Why... do this?"

Hearing the hoarse and barely audible question, one of the mountain dwellers

instantly spat and shouted at her.

"You're asking us why? Isn't it obvious? Of course we're under orders from the one who gave us this."

Saying that, the mountain dweller made a circular gesture reminiscent of money.

"And what a tidy sum it was."

"It's rare for us to find such lucrative hired work."

"As a reward for simply poisoning this little lass, this is quite a big fortune."

The mountain dwellers were laughing one after another. Listening to their jeering, the girl reacted with a bitter expression of chagrin.

One of the mountain dwellers suddenly grinned lewdly. Sticking his tongue out, he licked his lips.

"...By the way, as expected from a lowlander girl, what a pretty face."

"What a waste to just kill her off like that."

"Since we have to bury her anyway, let's have some fun first."

"That goes without saying. It'd be too tragic if this little lass died without experiencing the pleasures of life."

Extremely shameless laughter resounded in the deep mountain forest. One man was about to extend his dirty paws to strip the girl.

(Observing the situation longer is not an option.)

While making his decision, Chrom took out a wooden arrow from his quiver. Rather than the makeshift arrows he had created earlier, this was a sharp arrow fitted with fletchings that he normally used for hunting.

Drawing the bowstring tight, he instantly aimed for his target and released the arrow to fly with a rapid whoosh.

The arrow flew through the trees and pierced the shoulder of the mountain dweller who was trying to molest the girl.

"Aghhh!"

"W-What's happening?"

Suddenly knocked back by the arrow piercing his shoulder, the man began to cry and wail, unable to bear the agony. The mountain dwellers looked around them uneasily with bated breaths. Seeing that, Chrom and Ryuryu instantly shot their makeshift arrows in different directions. Flying from their bows without prior aiming, the arrows would bend and bounce as soon as they struck trees, changing in trajectory, finally stabbing into the ground near the mountain dwellers who were about to make a move on the girl.

Thus Chrom and Ryuryu kept shooting arrows repeatedly, confident that the arrows, bouncing off the trees, would give their opponents the illusion that the arrows were coming from all directions in the forest.

"W-Where are they?"

As expected, the flustered mountain dwellers desperately tried to survey their surroundings. However, there was not a single soul in sight as far as they could see.

"...Let's stop for now, Ryuryu."

"Yes."

"Until I give the signal, stay here and be prepared to adapt to the situation."

"Got it."

Chrom nodded in response to Ryuryu's answer, then dashed out from the shadows among the trees.

With frightened gazes, the mountain dwellers all looked at Chrom.

Chrom put on a flawless pose and narrowed his eyes at the four mountain dwellers.

"I'm sorry for interrupting your fun, but may I ask you to show mercy and let that girl go?"

"Y-You... Who the heck are you!?"

"Am I obliged to introduce myself?"

"Say that again..."

Chrom spoke indifferently with a calm expression. The mountain dwellers surrounding the girl instantly revealed malicious looks.

"Your actions have already violated the rules of the mountain. You not only drugged the lowlanders but even intended to kill them cruelly. None of these behaviors are permitted by the rules of the mountain."

These words put awkward expressions on the mountain dweller's faces again, striking fear into their hearts. But that only happened for a brief instant. The mountain dwellers instantly fell silent, motioned to one another with their eyes and brought their hands to the hilts of their machetes. Hence, Chrom spoke in rapid fire before they could draw their blades, "Go ahead if you want to silence us, but take note that we're quite numerous. Our numbers are enough to heavily injure all of you."

The instant Chrom finished and raised his hand lightly, numerous arrows flew forth from all directions. Plunging into the ground at the scene, all of these arrows were shot by Ryuryu.

"...I'm not lying, right?"

The awkward looks on the mountain dweller's faces became even more obvious. Judging from the angles of the arrows, there ought to be an illusion that they were surrounded in a semi-circular formation.

"So what's the decision? I'm telling you now that I'll turn a blind eye if you agree to withdraw here and now. Or should I simply report to the chiefs that you were violating the rules of the mountain? The latter would be quite unwise a choice."

However, the mountain dwellers still retorted, refusing to give up.

"S-So what!? Why should the chiefs listen to some unknown guy like you...?"

"They won't believe me? Don't be ridiculous. Isn't there an eyewitness right here?"

Saying that, Chrom pointed at the girl.

"Even if the chiefs don't buy my story, they'll believe the lowlander's account at least. Because once ties are broken with the towns in the lowlands, we'll never

get salt and grain again."

To the mountain dwellers, the rules were absolute. As soon as actions violating the rules of the mountain reached the chiefs, the culprits would assuredly be rejected by the community. Those who broke the rules were known as "the ostracized." The fate awaiting the ostracized was being loners for the rest of their lives, unable to receive aid from anyone even when suffering from hunger or disease in the mountains. There was probably no harsher fate when trying to survive in a treacherous natural environment.

The mountain dwellers seemed to have decided their answer.

"F-Fine... You really aren't gonna report to the chiefs, right?"

"Yeah, that's definitely my intention. As long as you guys back off right now..."

After a moment's silence, the mountain dwellers left the scene in trepidation.

After making sure they had gone far away, Chrom came to the girl and extended his palm.

"What a disaster out of nowhere, where are you..."

Where are you from? What is your name? —Before Chrom could finish, he took a clear look at her face and instantly reeled back in surprise.

"Don't tell me you're... Fiffnise?"

".....Chrom."

Murmuring Chrom's name quietly, the girl breathed a long sigh of relief as though her tense nerves had snapped. Then utterly exhausted, she closed her eyes.